



The Den . . . In Focus

First Street Project Update

www.stcharlesil.gov/departments/cdd/firststreet.html

The First Street Redevelopment Project is making progress behind the scenes. City staff and the development group are working out the terms of the Redevelopment Agreement, which must be in place before construction activity can begin. Typical agreements set terms for financing, determine a timeframe for construction, and clarify the respective responsibilities of the City and developer. Meanwhile, the developer's architects are exploring options to incorporate comments from the public meetings held so far. City staff members have begun a detailed review of the preliminary engineering plan and the steps to analyze, plan and design the public improvements, including water, sewer, electric, streets, public sidewalks and plazas. Future public meetings for review of revised plans and other project requirements will be announced.

The City also has initiated a First Street Communications Plan and formed an internal team to focus on continuous communication of progress and milestones. The team met to discuss the coordination of information from the various parties, a construction kickoff event, a First Street web site, and a logo for the project. They are honored to have Bill Paetzold, owner of Paetzold Associates, 4 N. Third St. in St. Charles, contributing pro bono work on the logo. The team hopes to develop materials and events that will create greater awareness and excitement for the project, a better understanding, and a sense of partnership throughout the community.

Work has begun on Milestone Row, just west of the Brownstone townhomes, at the south end of First Street. This private development was initiated in anticipation of the First Street Redevelopment Project; it is not included in the TIF or project boundaries. It demonstrates a growing interest for investment in redevelopment as a result of First Street and will be a welcome addition to that area.

Speaking of TIF (Tax Increment Financing), you may recall that TIF is a financing mechanism that allocates taxes generated from increased property values within a designated area to pay for improvements in that area. There are several key ideas behind a TIF:

- After much examination, it was determined that development on First Street is not feasible without the TIF. Because the area had many different, smaller buildings and



owners, no one property owner would have had the resources to redevelop the property and facilitate the public improvements and infrastructure required for the whole area.

- It is assumed that the properties within the TIF area would not increase in value, or increase at a much slower pace, without intervention by a municipality with the ability to seek out and spur redevelopment.
- The portion of the property taxes that result from the increase in property values (both market and increases because of the redevelopment) within the designated TIF area are used to pay bonds that facilitate public improvements within that area. Redevelopment expenses paid by the TIF funds are set by the Illinois State Statutes.
- The other taxing bodies (Park Dist., Library, School, Township, etc.) will continue to receive tax monies from the properties within the TIF district at the same rate they received at the time the TIF was established. Taxes from the TIF properties account for a very small portion of their tax revenues, given their larger boundaries.
- All taxing bodies will see an immediate benefit from increased property values of the surrounding properties as a result of the redevelopment. Once the TIF period is over, they will realize long-term benefits of additional tax dollars from newly generated property values.

S. B. Friedman and Associates, a well-respected, independent consulting firm with extensive experience in municipal TIF funding, reviewed all of the financial information provided by the City and the developer. They

<http://www.stcharlesil.gov/news/stcharlesnewsflashcsg.html>

determined that the project is economically feasible. The financial analysis presentation given by the consulting firm is available at www.stcharlesil.gov/departments/cdd/firststreet.html. Questions on the financial analysis may be directed to Pam Colby, Finance Director (630-377-4478/pcolby@stcharlesil.gov).

The City's and developer's emphasis for First Street is to create a downtown experience that reflects the historic character, atmosphere and uniqueness that many fondly remember and we all must work

together to preserve. We look forward to . . .

- Additional shopping and public areas, as well as the downtown residential units, that will create a pedestrian friendly atmosphere and comfortable gathering places for everyone to enjoy.
- New businesses that create jobs and compliment existing retailers.
- Additional tax base and spurred redevelopment that will provide a good, balanced source of revenue

for all of the taxing bodies far into the future.

As First Street takes shape, community excitement and support is key. We want everyone to feel a closeness to the project, celebrate its milestones, stay informed (check updates at www.stcharlesil.gov/departments/cdd/firststreet.html), and demonstrate their support. The level of community support will ultimately assure the success of First Street and create a greater St. Charles for future generations.

Red Gate Bridge Update

The City of St. Charles is processing the Phase One, study engineering, aspect of this project. Work is approximately 50% complete. Citizens interested in the Red Gate Bridge project may visit the City's project web site at www.redgatebridge.org. This web site includes information concerning the Red Gate Bridge project, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and is updated periodically. A sample of FAQs follows:

Why should this bridge be built when the Stearns Road bridge will be built a few miles north of this one?

Stearns Road is a regional bridge that will carry traffic from Randall Road to Route 59 and beyond.

Red Gate is a local crossing that will carry local traffic. The traffic studies indicate that 48% of the trips that cross the bridge will begin AND end within five miles of the bridge. Another 50% will either begin OR end with that area, and the remaining 2% will be passing through. This indicates that the bridge will be used primarily by local traffic.

Is the value of a 10% reduction in traffic on Main Street worth the \$25 to \$30 Million that will be spent on this bridge?

The City believes that a 10% reduction in traffic through

downtown is worth moving ahead. Furthermore, this project, in conjunction with the Stearns Road project, will reduce traffic on Main Street through downtown by approximately 20%. It is the collective impact of all river crossing locations that makes all projects worthy. It should be pointed out that the Illinois and Prairie Street Bridges in St. Charles divert 20,000 to 30,000 vehicles per day from the Main Street river crossing.

Would it be better to wait until Stearns Road is built and see how it performs before going forward with Red Gate?

There are many reasons to go ahead with the Red Gate project now rather than wait. To begin with, the project will be designed to accommodate the traffic that is projected for 20 years after the project is built. These projections are based on assumptions about patterns of growth within the area that influences the project. Waiting until after Stearns is built would not necessarily increase the accuracy of the projections because they would still be based on assumptions of future growth patterns (20 to 25 years ahead from the point in time of the analysis).

Cost is an important reason to build now. Every year the project is delayed, the cost of construction will increase due to

inflation. In addition to rising construction costs is the cost that local drivers will pay because of extra distance traveled to cross the river. The traffic studies indicate that each year the bridge would save local drivers more than 4,000,000 miles traveled. This amounts to nearly \$2,000,000 per year in vehicle operating costs. This reduction in vehicle miles traveled reduces hydrocarbon, carbon monoxide, and nitrogen dioxide emissions. Drivers will experience fewer accidents and injuries from less time on the road.

Another reason for building now is that the project will provide better emergency services response times for those residents on the north end of St. Charles and the surrounding communities. Delaying the bridge will delay their access to better emergency services.

